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10

IMPROVISATION AND COMPOSITION:

Developing Musicianship in Instrumental Music

Christopher D. Azzara

The imagination and grit required for creativity may be best illustrated by a story about a five-year-old child drawing a picture. A grownup approached her, asking, "What are you drawing?" The child answered, "I'm drawing a picture of God," to which the grownup said, "Oh . . . Nobody knows what God looks like." And the child replied, "Well, they will in a minute!"

In this chapter, I will expound on the importance of creativity in music learning. Specifically, I will describe curricula for learning to improvise and compose in a variety of instrumental music settings. Perhaps we can learn a lesson from the kindergartener: Let us use our curiosity, imaginations, and determination to open our minds to what is possible when improvisation and composition are vital elements in instrumental music curricula.

IMPROVISATION AND COMPOSITION'S ROLES IN MUSIC LEARNING

Outside of jazz ensemble and some general music classes, improvisation and composition are not skills that come to mind for most instrumental music teachers, yet both are fundamental to learning music. Essential in their own right, improvisation and composition are the means for students to create music, express musical ideas, and indicate comprehension of music they hear and read (Azzara, 2002). Too often, teachers ask students to listen, analyze, and watch

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without improvising and composing; in other words, they give their students input and directions without engaging in creativity. In addition, most instrumental students do not sing or move as part of their lesson curriculum—skills central to developing musicianship (Grunow, 2005).

Historical Precedent

Thoughts about the significance of creativity in music education have historical context. For example, Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778–1837), composer and exuberant improviser, wrote:

> I close by recommending free improvisation in general and in every respectable form to all those for whom [music] is not merely a matter of entertainment and practical ability, but rather principally one of inspiration and meaning in their art. This recommendation, to be sure, has never been so urgent now, because the number of people whose interest belongs to the former category and not to the latter has never been so great. Even if a person plays with inspiration, but always from a written score, he or she will be much less nourished, broadened, and educated than through the frequent offering of all of his or her powers in a free fantasy practiced in the full awareness of certain guidelines and directions, even if this improvisation is only moderately successful. (Hummel as cited in Goertzen, 1996, p. 305)

Hummel, the musician who composed a trumpet concerto that, to this day, students play to audition for music school, calls his recommendation to improvise *urgent*—in 1828! He underlines the value of improvisation in music teaching and learning, and he connects improvising music to inspiration and meaning.

Socrates (469/470 BC–399 BC) had similar concerns. In *Phaedrus* (Plato, c. 370 BC), Socrates shared his thoughts about technology—specifically letters—by describing a conversation between Theuth, the "first to discover letters," and Thamus, wise "King of all Egypt." At one point in the conversation, Thamus states to Theuth:

> Your invention [letters] will produce forgetfulness in the souls of those who have learned it, through lack of practice at using their memory, as through reliance on writing they are reminded from outside by alien marks, not from within themselves by themselves. So you have discovered an elixir not of memory but of reminding. To your students you give an appearance of wisdom, not the reality of it; thanks to you, they will hear many things without being taught them, and will

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appear to know much when for the most part they know nothing, and they will be difficult to get along with because they have acquired the appearance of wisdom instead of wisdom itself.

Comprehension

Regarding the same issue, author and educator Healy suggests that "the ability to bark at print is not reading, but many people, including well-meaning parents, think it is. The real heart of the matter [is]: how well do [children] understand what they have read? Can they reason—and talk, and write—about it?" (Healy, 1990, p. 26)

How does this idea apply to music? When our students do not understand or "speak the language" that they are reading, they will attempt to perform the correct notes, but with limited comprehension. Students could play an entire piece without understanding it! Often, music teachers rehearse dynamics, phrasing, intonation, and tell students to watch and keep track of where they are in the measure (count) without prioritizing comprehension and creativity; they are learning letter names and time values of notes without musical meaning. To paraphrase Healy, are students able to musically think (reason), improvise (talk), and compose (write) about what they are reading? When our students can sing, chant, improvise, and compose musical content related to what they read, they provide evidence of comprehension.

Context

Context is necessary for comprehension. The letter *G* has many contexts, as in *go*, *phlegm*, and *gnome*. The same is true for letter combinations; that is, *gh* can be read in *ghost* and *cough* and *ough* is also found in *though*, *through*, *bough*. Even words require context for comprehension: *Mrs. Reid read a book while sitting in a red chair.* The words *nose*, *dose*, and *lose* each end in *ose*. Without context, such words would be routinely mispronounced and indeed, misunderstood.

Repertoire and musical phrases provide context for musical comprehension, analogous to the way stories and sentences provide context for language comprehension. Just as the letter *g* has many contexts in words, the note *G* could be the root of a G major triad or a G minor triad, the third of Eb, the fifth of C, or the #9 of E7#9. The tonality, meter, and style of repertoire provide context for musical "parts" such as notes and patterns. A musically rich repertoire in a variety of styles (e.g., folk, popular, classical, jazz), tonalities (e.g., major, minor,

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Mixolydian, Dorian, etc.), and meters (e.g., duple, triple, 5/8, and 7/8) is at the heart of developing musicianship.

PRINCIPLES OF IMPROVISATION

As instrumental music teachers, how might we implement curriculum that involves improvisation and composition, especially in light of the current model for instrumental music instruction? Are there specific methods and techniques that we can use to include creativity in an instrumental setting? To answer these questions, we need to have an understanding of the learning process and acquire skills necessary to change the status quo. With strong musicianship, we can gain the skills associated with improvisation and composition. These skills, combined with an awareness of what musically motivates our students, will provide a foundation for the construction of our instrumental music curricula.

Overcoming Fear and Anxiety

Many well-meaning teachers may be anxious about teaching something they have little experience doing. Accomplished improvisers and composers may not have thought much about how you *learn* to improvise and compose, and they may present material haphazardly or resort to intimidation. Both teachers and students may be afraid of making mistakes (Snell & Azzara, in progress).

Indeed, fear and anxiety are at the root of many persons' hesitation to create and improvise. Nachmanovitch (1990) wrote of fears that could inhibit our creative freedom. At different times in our lives, we may be worried about what others might think, anxious about taking a chance and making a mistake, apprehensive about losing our reputation as a great musician (and then losing our job), and nervous about feeling like a fool. It has been said that public speaking is the number one fear in America. Perhaps people are even more afraid of improvising music. To these fears, Nachmanovitch added, "fear of ghosts . . . being overwhelmed by teachers, authorities, parents, or great masters" (p. 135).

The shared work of learning begins when we can let go of our fears. The mind-set of early childhood can be inspiration for transcending our fear: curiosity, exploration, and living "in the moment" are necessary for learning. Creative persons have the courage to make mistakes—*smart* mistakes. *Smart failure* means that you try something, learn from your mistakes, and benefit from your experiences in order to continue creating and innovating.

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Developing Musicianship

Improvisation is the spontaneous expression of musical ideas—analogous to speaking and conversation in language, improvisation is "in the moment." The spirit of improvisation should be present when you listen, improvise, read, and compose. The principle difference between improvising and composing is temporal: in composition, you have time to reflect and revise (Sarath, 1996); in improvisation, you express musical thought in the moment of performance. Some of our students may respond best to composition opportunities, yet they should still be given opportunities to improvise (Azzara, 1993).

Learning a large repertoire by ear, in a variety of tonalities, meters, and styles, is fundamental to developing musicianship. Learning to improvise and compose improves musicianship (Burton, 2011; Reynolds, Long, & Valerio, 2007). Several key principles for musicianship are: (a) listen, sing, move, and play; (b) learn melody, harmony, rhythm, and musical vocabulary by ear; (c) remember that symbols represent sounds, thus, students should learn sound before sight; (d) take chances; and (e) be in the moment.

MUSIC CURRICULUM CONSTRUCTION

With these principles of musicianship in mind, plan for your music curricula to address four basic, recurrent vocabularies: (a) listening, (b) performing (singing, playing, and improvising), (c) reading, and (d) composing. Listening to and performing music work in tandem to provide context for reading and composing music. If our goal is for our students to have comprehension when listening, performing, reading, and composing, we must help them learn the following four skills and apply them to all music they learn.

First, *group* pitches into meaningful patterns and phrases and pay attention to the reuse of material. Group pitches into patterns, patterns into phrases, phrases into tunes, tunes into repertoire. Second, *compare* patterns, phrases, and tunes. Are they the same or not the same? Compare what you audiate to what you sing; compare what you sing to what you play on your instrument. Third, *interact* with others when performing with and without notation, and with notation when reading and composing. Fourth, *anticipate and predict* patterns and phrases. If our students have developed a large repertoire by ear, they will make more comparisons, anticipate and predict more easily, and interact more deeply with others and notation.

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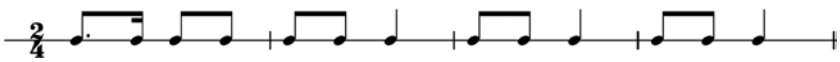

Figure 10.1. Melodic Rhythm of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" and "London Bridge is Falling Down"

We can help our students make connections with the repertoire they are learning by ear by comparing and contrasting tonalities, meters, styles, and harmonic progressions. We should highlight how harmonic and rhythmic vocabulary of a piece creates unity and variety, and use this insight for inspiration when improvising and composing music. For example, "Mary Had a Little Lamb," "London Bridge," and "Go Tell Aunt Rhody"—songs in major tonality that most beginning instrumentalists learn—have the same harmonic progression and harmonic rhythm (I, I, V7, I). "Go Tell Aunt Rhody" performed in minor tonality has the same harmonic progression as "Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho." The melodic rhythm of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" and "London Bridge Is Falling Down" is the same (see figure 10.1). "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," originally a French folk song, repeats one rhythm pattern throughout the entire piece. The opening rhythm of "Go Tell Aunt Rhody" is the same as the opening rhythm of the second movement of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7*. Beethoven uses this rhythm pattern as the creative inspiration for the entire movement (see figure 10.2).

Musicians anticipate familiar music and predict unfamiliar music (Grunow, Gordon, & Azzara, 1999, 2001, 2002). For this reason it is essential to establish the tonality, meter, and style of music when you teach it, especially if the music is unfamiliar. The tunes we know inform our musicianship because they provide context and syntax for learning unfamiliar tunes by ear.

In music, we can teach comprehension and musicianship by paying attention to the same skills (group (re-use); compare; and anticipate/predict-interact). The standard repertoire for beginning instrumentalists is perfect for developing this kind of understanding. "Go Tell Aunt Rhody," "London Bridge Is Falling Down," and "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" are not just

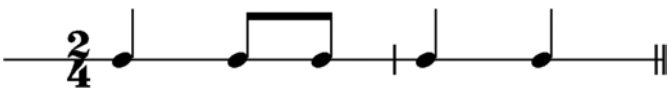

Figure 10.2. Melodic Rhythm of "Go Tell Aunt Rhody" and *Beethoven's Symphony No. 7*, 2nd Movement

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children's songs—they are song treasures that have stood the test of time. Consider "Go Tell Aunt Rhody." Typically, the tune is presented in beginning instrumental books in quarter notes and half notes, one beat at a time, with the objective that students will learn note names and note values and be able to keep track of where they are on the page. Imagine if you had to read this sentence one letter at a time while identifying each letter. It would be difficult t o c o m p r e h e n d w h a t y o u w e r e r e a d i n g. You do not spell when you listen. You do not spell when you read. The "spelling" of note names and note values is best taught through writing (composition), after a student has developed extensive listening, singing, improvising, and reading vocabularies. When you *listen* and *improvise* with comprehension, and *read* music with comprehension, you *group* notes into meaningful patterns and phrases, *comparing* those patterns to others as you *anticipate* and musically *interact* with what comes next.

When Hummel wrote about being in the "full awareness of certain guidelines and directions," he was asking us to pay attention to musical patterns and phrases and to develop them in meaningful ways. How much music can you make with only one or two rhythm patterns? Think of the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, or the second movement of his Seventh Symphony. The bridge of Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm" has the same rhythm pattern as the beginning of the A section. Are students paying attention to this creative interaction, or just playing the notes, one quarter note at a time?

APPLICATION

When preparing lessons, think "whole—part—whole." For example, repertoire provides context for phrases; phrases provide context for patterns. Koestler coined the term *holon* to describe something that is simultaneously a whole and a part (Koestler as cited in Wilber, 2000). Patterns provide context for notes and are part of phrases; phrases provide context for patterns and are part of tunes; and tunes provide context for phrases and are a part of many tunes (repertoire). To put this concept into practice, establish tonality, meter, and style, and teach your students the melody and bass line to a tune (whole) to provide context for notes, patterns, and phrases (parts). Echo patterns and phrases (parts) and have your students improvise their own patterns and phrases; this process will help students improve performance of the original tune (whole) (Azzara, 2008; Azzara & Grunow, 2006, 2010).

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Fundamentals of Improvisation

To develop a foundation for improvisation and composition, apply the following skills to any repertoire you are teaching or learning (Azzara, 2008; Azzara & Grunow, 2006, 2010):

1. Learn repertoire by ear.
2. Learn rhythm patterns and phrases, tonal patterns and harmonic progressions, and expressive elements such as dynamics, articulation, and phrasing.
3. Improvise melodic phrases through spontaneous interaction.
4. Learn Seven Skills to improvise.
5. Learn solos and musical excerpts by ear.
6. Read and compose in the context of improvisation.
7. Compose—using the Seven Skills.

Playing by Ear

Learning many tunes by ear is an important part of developing musicianship and learning to improvise and compose. As mentioned previously, an important part of learning by ear is making connections within and among the repertoire you know. Many tunes have similar harmonic progressions or certain rhythmic qualities that provide a context for learning and remembering tunes. The more tunes your students learn by ear, the easier it will become for them to learn additional tunes by ear.[1]

"Amazing Grace" is a fine choice for you to teach your students to improvise in an instrumental setting. In addition to the many instrumental arrangements of "Amazing Grace," this tune provides context for learning the rhythmic, harmonic, melodic, and expressive elements of the song by ear. To begin, establish tonality in F major, and teach your students the melody and bass line for "Amazing Grace" by ear. Then, have your students play "Amazing Grace" on their instruments in several keys. Familiarity with "Amazing Grace" (see figure 10.3) provides context for major tonality and triple meter. Draw your students' attention to how the elements of meter and tonality are expressed and reused in creative ways: (a) triple meter rhythm patterns and phrases, (b) major tonality tonal patterns, (c) harmonic progression (I-IV-I-V7-I), (d) melodic phrases, and (e) expressive elements such as style, articulation, dynamics, and tone quality.

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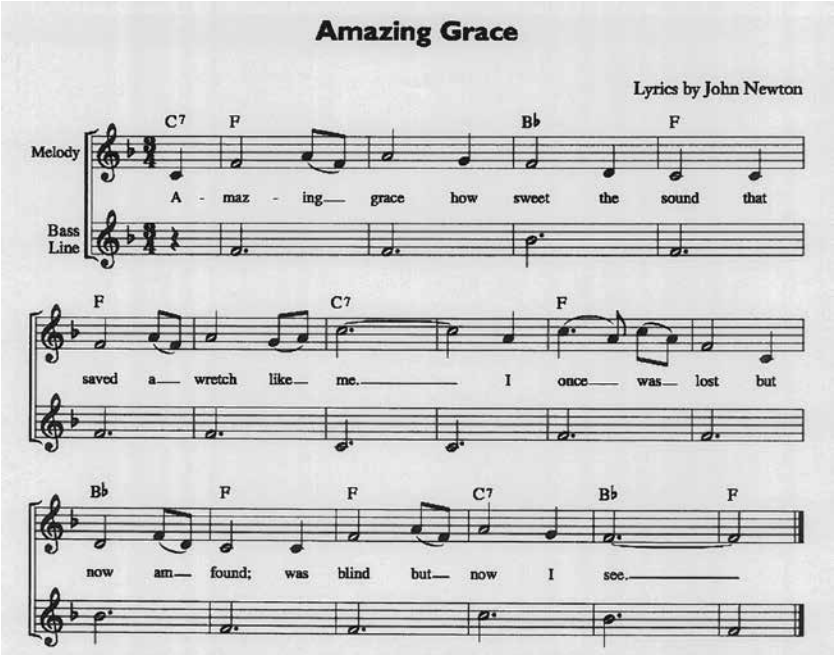

Figure 10.3. "Amazing Grace" Melody and Bass Line. From *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation: Book 2* (p. 21), by C. D. Azzara and R. F. Grunow, 2010, Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc. Copyright 2010 by GIA Publications, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

Improvising Expressive Rhythm Patterns and Phrases

Improvise related rhythm patterns inspired by the musical vocabulary of "Amazing Grace." Consider the following as a possible procedure (see figure 10.4):

1. *Teacher:* Establish meter. Chant rhythm patterns using the syllable *bah*. *Students:* Echo alone and as a group on *bah*.
2. *Teacher:* Establish meter. Chant rhythmic phrases using the syllable *bah*. *Students:* Echo alone and as a group on *bah*.
3. *Teacher:* Chant rhythm patterns using the syllable *bah*. *Students:* Improvise rhythm patterns alone and as a group.
4. *Teacher:* Chant rhythmic phrases using the syllable *bah*. *Students:* Improvise rhythmic phrases alone and as a group.

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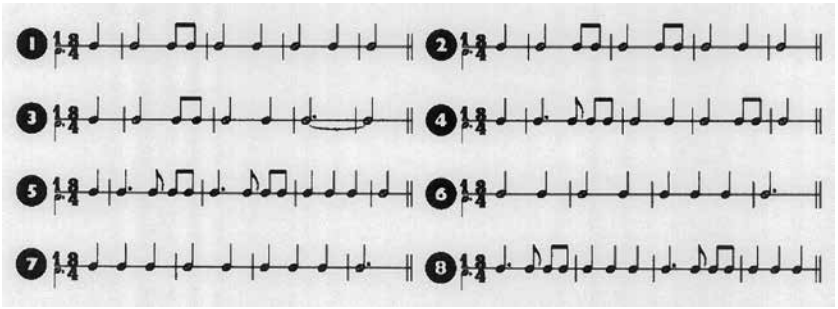

Figure 10.4. Rhythm Patterns. From *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation: Book 2* (p. 22), by C. D. Azzara and R. F. Grunow, 2010, Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc. Copyright 2010 by GIA Publications, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

Echo and Improvise in a Similar Manner with Rhythm Syllables

Improvising Expressive Tonal Patterns and Phrases

Next, improvise by singing and playing tonic, subdominant, and dominant tonal patterns and harmonic progressions of patterns. In major, a tonic pattern is any combination of DO–MI–SO, a subdominant pattern is any combination of FA–LA–DO, and a dominant pattern is any combination of SO–TI–RE–FA. *Before improvising, students should echo alone and as a group after you sing patterns with and without solfège (see figure 10.5).*

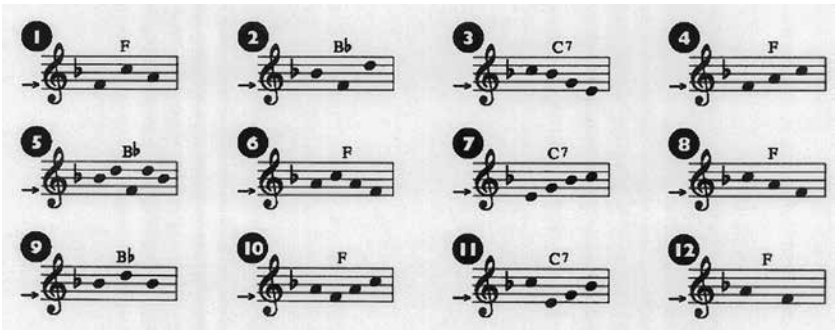

Figure 10.5. Tonal Patterns. From *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation: Book 2* (p. 25), by C. D. Azzara and R. F. Grunow, 2010, Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc. Copyright 2010 by GIA Publications, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

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1. *Teacher:* Establish tonality in F major. Sing tonal patterns, on the syllable *bum*. *Students:* Echo in solo and as a group on *bum*.
2. *Teacher:* Sing tonal patterns on solfège, and then play on an instrument. *Students:* Improvise tonal patterns in solo and as a group, then improvise patterns on instruments.

Patterns Based on the Harmonic Progression

Teach students to sing patterns in harmonic progressions from "Amazing Grace," first using a neutral syllable *bum* and then with solfège (e.g., figure 10.6). Keep in mind, when learning to play in several keys, students should learn movable DO, in which F is DO in F major, Bb is DO in Bb major, Eb is DO in Eb major, and so forth. LA-based minor helps students make comparisons when first learning to play by ear: D is LA in D minor, G is LA in G minor, C is LA in C minor, and so on.

After students are familiar with this tonal vocabulary, they should improvise tonal patterns and phrases in solo and as a group.

1. *Teacher:* Establish tonality in F-Do with solfège. Sing a tonic pattern with solfège. *Students:* Improvise a tonic pattern with solfège in solo or as a group.
2. Continue in a similar manner for the subdominant function and the dominant function.
3. *When these patterns are familiar vocally, students should learn to play them on their instruments.*

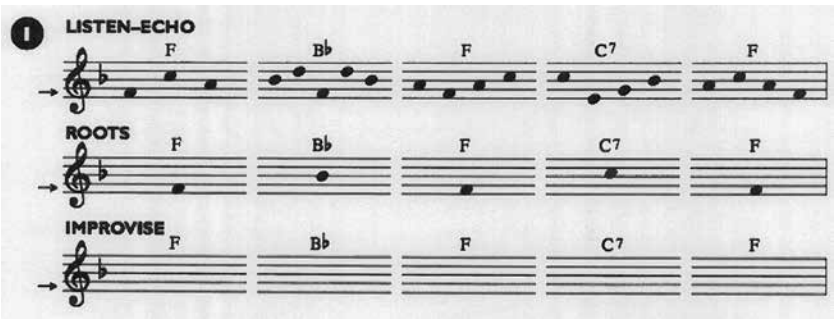

Figure 10.6. Harmonic Progressions from "Amazing Grace." From *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation: Book 2* (p. 27), by C. D. Azzara and R. F. Grunow, 2010, Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc. Copyright 2010 by GIA Publications, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

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4. *Teacher:* Sing and play progressions in major. For example: I-IV-I-V-I. *Students:* Improvise by singing or playing patterns to this harmonic progression in major tonality.

Improvising Melodic Phrases

The following procedure will help students anticipate and predict musical phrases in the context of "Amazing Grace." Students should trust their musical instincts as they interact with you, improvising antecedent and consequent phrases.

1. *Teacher:* Following the harmonic progression of "Amazing Grace," sing the antecedent phrase of "Amazing Grace" followed by a consequent phrase that is different from the original melody. Continue in a similar manner with the remaining phrases. Direct your improvised melody toward chord tones, and end your phrase on a note that makes sense musically. *Students:* In response to the teacher's phrase, sing an antecedent or consequent phrase.
2. *Teacher and Students:* Perform in a similar manner, this time on your instrument.
3. *Teacher and Students:* Improvise both antecedent and consequent phrases over the harmonic progression of "Amazing Grace."

Seven Skills for Improvising

When students have built tonal and rhythm vocabularies through patterns and phrases, the Seven Skills provide a procedure to improve their improvisation skills in small and large ensembles. Once you and your students have internalized these skills, do not overanalyze what you are doing. Concentrate on developing motives and creating melodies. Before beginning the Seven Skills, review the melody and bass line for "Amazing Grace."

Skill 1. Establish tonality in F major and improvise rhythm patterns to the bass line of "Amazing Grace." Sing your improvisation on a neutral syllable, and then play it on your instrument (see figure 10.7).

Skill 2. Establish tonality and teach the students four parts, as shown in figure 10.8. These lines will help students understand the essential voice-leading of "Amazing Grace" and other repertoire containing tonic, subdominant, and dominant harmonies. Every student should have an opportunity to sing and play all four parts. In this way, low strings and low brass players will have an

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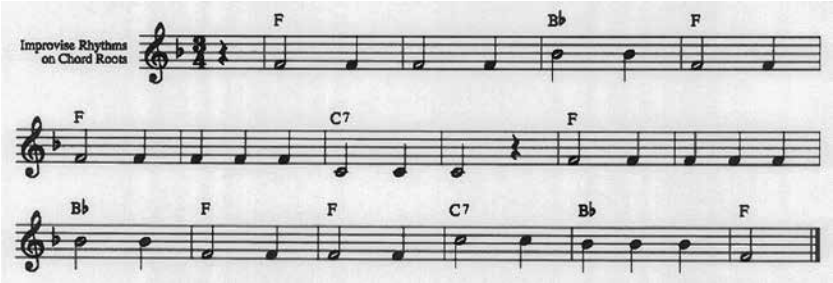

Figure 10.7. Improvise Rhythms on Chord Roots. From *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation: Book 2* (p. 30), by C. D. Azzara and R. F. Grunow, 2010, Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc. Copyright 2010 by GIA Publications, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

opportunity to sing and play parts more typically assigned to soprano and alto voices; flutists and violinists will have an opportunity to sing and play bass parts.

Skill 3. Students learn the harmonic rhythm for "Amazing Grace." Using the pitches from the harmony in Skill 2, students should sustain the notes and change pitches when the harmony changes in the tune (the harmonic progression can be found in figure 10.3).

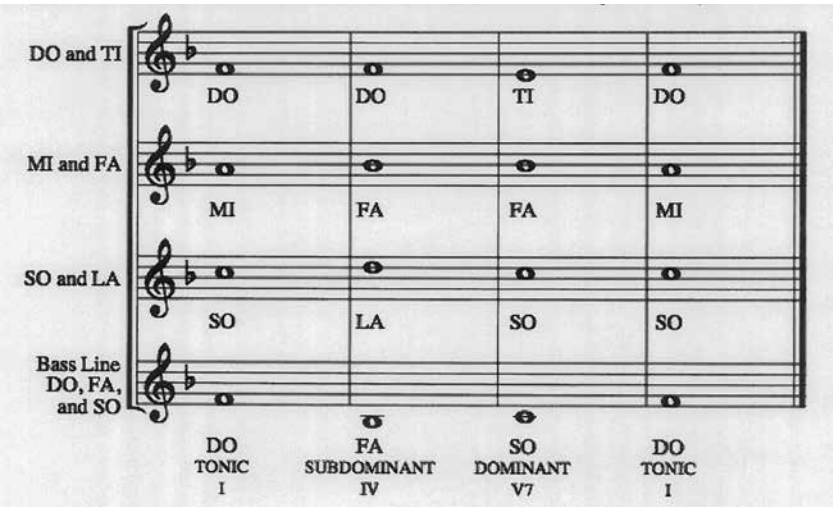

Figure 10.8. Voice Leading. From *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation: Book 2* (p. 31), by C. D. Azzara and R. F. Grunow, 2010, Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc. Copyright 2010 by GIA Publications, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

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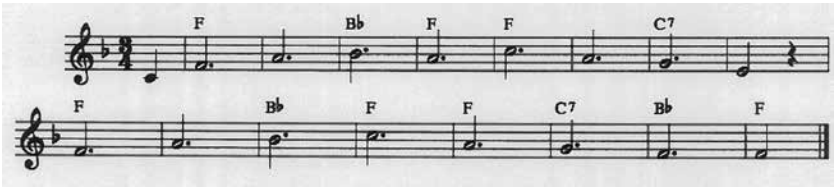

Figure 10.9. Skill 5. From *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation: Book 2* (p. 32), by C. D. Azzara and R. F. Grunow, 2010, Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc. Copyright 2010 by GIA Publications, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

Skill 4. On a neutral syllable, students improvise rhythm patterns to the harmonic progression for "Amazing Grace" using the pitches learned in Skill 2 (see figure 10.8). Perform this with each part. Students should interact with the melody and other parts. First sing, and then play these parts on your instrument.

Skill 5. When students are familiar with improvising tonal patterns, improvise to the harmonic progression of "Amazing Grace" on each large beat, DU (sing, then play on an instrument) (see figure 10.9).

Skill 6. Next, combine tonal patterns and rhythm patterns for "Amazing Grace" to improvise (sing, then play on an instrument) a melody such as in figure 10.10.

Skill 7. Decorate and embellish the melodic material in Skill 6 (see figure 10.11). Improvise (sing, then play on an instrument) melodies to the harmonic progression. Students will benefit from learning other parts and exemplar solos.

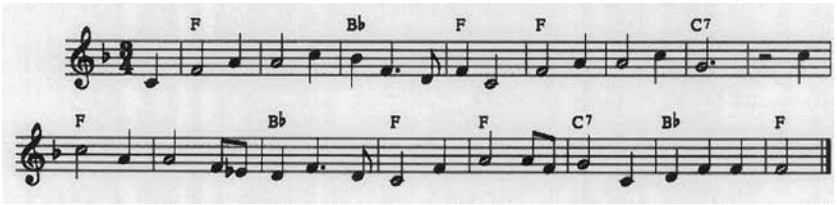

Figure 10.10. Sample Improvised Melody (Skill 6). From *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation: Book 2* (p. 33), by C. D. Azzara and R. F. Grunow, 2010, Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc. Copyright 2010 by GIA Publications, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

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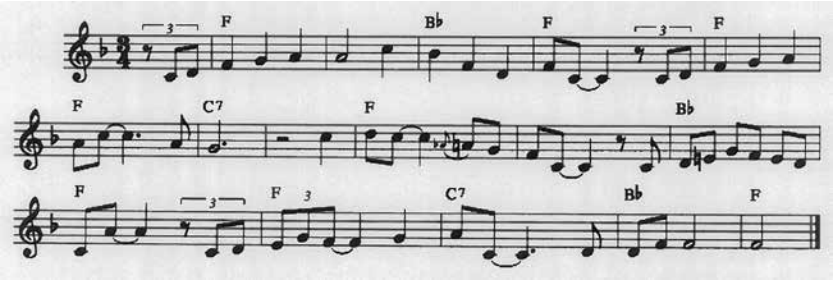

Figure 10.11. Sample Improvised Melody (Skill 7). From *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation: Book 2* (p. 33), by C. D. Azzara and R. F. Grunow, 2010, Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc. Copyright 2010 by GIA Publications, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

Reading and Composing

We perform with expressiveness and meaning when we learn to read and compose in the context of improvising and listening with comprehension. Most likely, your students will have composed and arranged music by ear. Now, encourage them to compose and arrange music with and without notation. When they become familiar with a musical vocabulary by ear and can improvise using the Seven Skills, teach them to read and to compose in the context of what they are audiating. Have your students read and write music at each aforementioned skill level, culminating in a composition and arrangement. Notation should remind us of how musical we are; it is a symbol for music.

Your students will be inspired by repertoire they are performing in small and large ensembles. They will benefit from copying, and from taking rhythm pattern, tonal pattern, and melodic dictation. As they improvise rhythm patterns, tonal patterns, melodies, bass lines, and inner voices through the Seven Skills, have them document their musical ideas.

Using repertoire as a foundation, your students can learn to compose original melodies and counterpoint. To begin this process, you should establish musical guidelines for your students' first compositions and arrangements. Provide opportunities for students to establish the musical content they feel would bring unity and variety to their composition. Many have said, "Writing is revising." Your students will learn from the reflection necessary to develop a composition.

Based on activities suggested in this chapter, here are some composition assignments you might assign to students. First, ask them to write the rhythm and tonal patterns they have already learned. For example, students may write the rhythm patterns presented in figure 10.4 and the tonal patterns presented in

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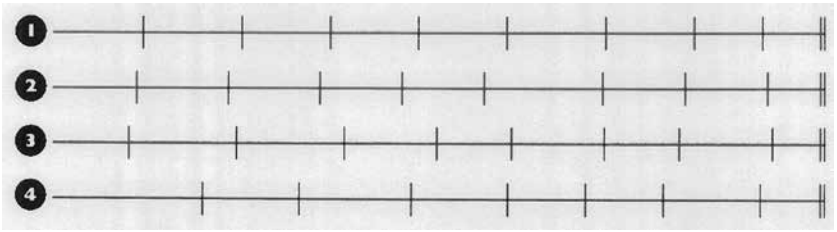

Figure 10.12. Writing a Series of Rhythm Patterns. From *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation: Book 2* (p. 34), by C. D. Azzara and R. F. Grunow, 2010, Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc. Copyright 2010 by GIA Publications, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

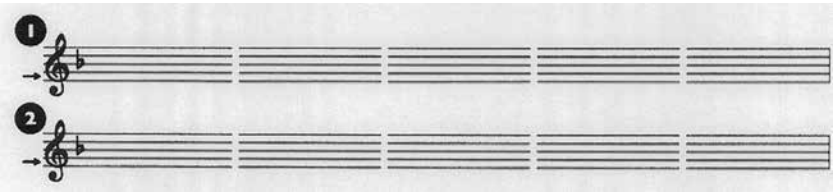

Figure 10.13. Writing a Series of Tonal Patterns. From *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation: Book 2* (p. 34), by C. D. Azzara and R. F. Grunow, 2010, Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc. Copyright 2010 by GIA Publications, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

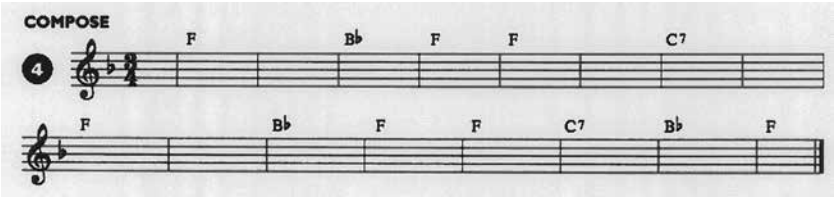

Figure 10.14. Composing. From *Developing Musicianship through Improvisation: Book 2* (p. 35), by C. D. Azzara and R. F. Grunow, 2010, Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc. Copyright 2010 by GIA Publications, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

figure 10.5. Students could next write their own patterns. Then, ask students to write a series of rhythm patterns (see figure 10.12) and a series of tonal patterns (see figure 10.13). By this point, students will have a musical context from which to write their own compositions based on the harmonic progression of "Amazing Grace" (see figure 10.14).

CONCLUSION

Creative musicians are in the moment; know a large repertoire of tunes by ear (including standard repertoire and original compositions); personalize what they are performing with expressive phrasing, dynamics, and harmonic and rhythmic variation; understand harmony and rhythm by ear; and interact and inspire others in ensemble.

Creativity, improvisation, and composition are central to the music learning process and should be at the core of music curricula. Through creativity, students express meaningful musical ideas and teachers have opportunities to teach to individual differences among students. With repertoire as a foundation, you can implement curriculum that includes improvisation and composition in a variety of styles and musical settings. In doing so, your students will gain deeper understanding of the literature they play and develop independence and musicianship skills to last throughout their lives.

NOTE

1. For suggestions on learning repertoire by ear, see *Jump Right In: The Instrumental Series Teacher Guide* (Grunow, Gordon, & Azzara, 1999, 2001, 2002).

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